

Menno-Life



First Mennonite Church • Bluffton, Ohio • Vol. 68, No. 6 • December 2021

Advent 2021

This Advent at First Mennonite Church, we are continuing our usual pattern of using much of our material from the *Leader*, our denominational magazine for pastors and lay leaders. Each year a team of writers, musicians, artists, and theologians suggest ideas for worship that can be used within the wider Mennonite Church. While we often tweak the material in the magazine to fit our congregation more appropriately, and this year is no exception, we are greatly appreciative for the excellent ideas and resources that are made available to us during Advent and Lent.

Our Advent team this year includes Melissa Friesen (scripture focus), Chris Moser (worship leader), Kendra Nickel (children), Carolyn Rich (chancel display and bulletin covers), and Mark Suderman (music and administration). Our meetings consisted of a devotional, brainstorming, delving into the Advent scriptures, area ideas and development, connecting themes, and more. As you have seen from the Advent Brochure, we are using the overarching theme “Dare to Imagine.” Each Sunday is then focusing in on one of God’s characteristics: goodness, embrace, song, humanity, dwelling, and radiance. The Old Testament lectionary reading, along with the Gospel reading, provide the focus for our thematic ideas and how those then connect with each area – Conversation with Children, opening words, music selections, chancel display, etc. What do we imagine about these characteristics of God? How do they play out in our world today? What words will enhance this imagination for all ages?

As you immerse yourself into this season, our hope is that the worship services will help lead you to a more profound understanding of God’s wonderful world and the special gift of Jesus Christ coming to live among us. We greatly appreciate your prayers for the church community as we move through a season that offers many joys, but is also a dark and difficult time for many. *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined. (Isaiah 9:2)*

- Mark Suderman, Director of Music and Interim Church Administrator

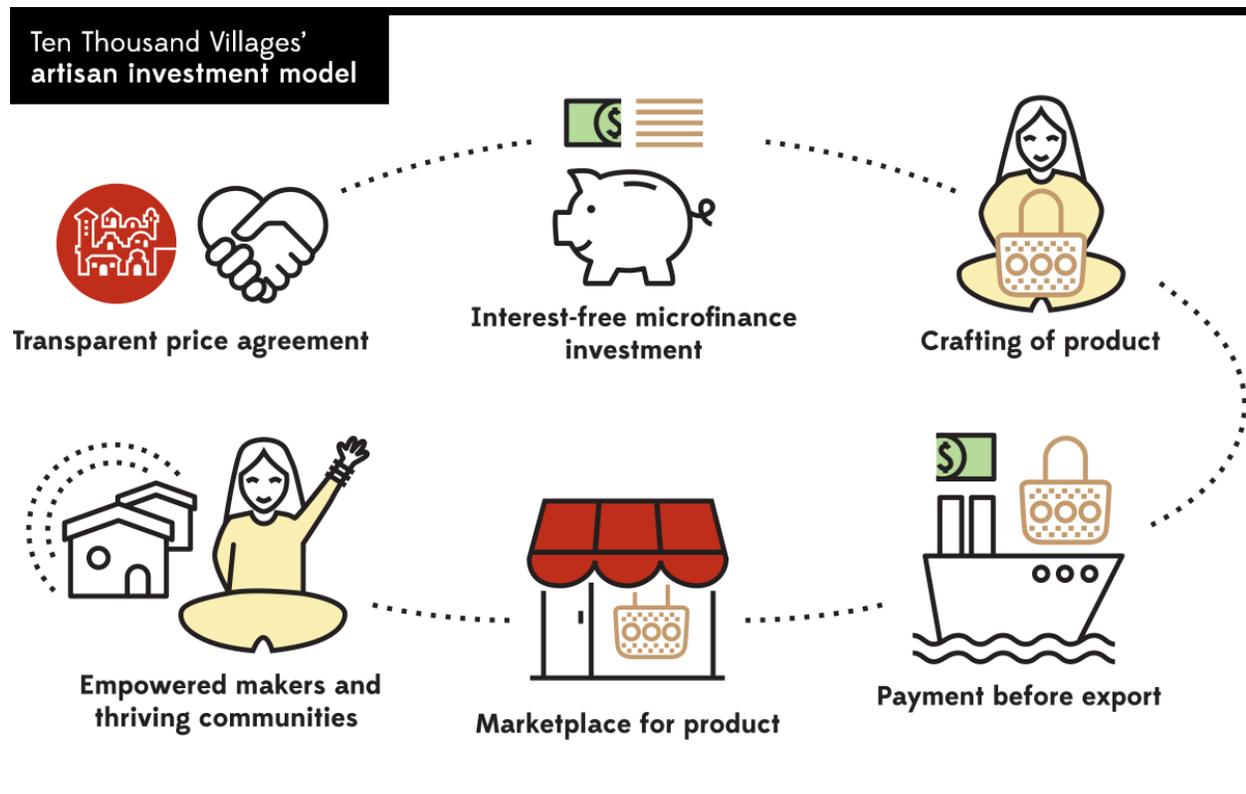
Ten Thousand Villages

Plan to shop at our Ten Thousand Villages “trunk sale” in the comfort of First Mennonite on December 5, after worship. Selected items will be available for purchase (payment by cash or checks only). For those unable to attend, visit the store on Main Street or shop online through the link: tenthousandvillages.com/bluffton; our store will receive a percentage of those sales.

Ten Thousand Villages has evolved from the early days of trunk sales, when Edna Ruth Byler drove around the United States and Canada, selling handcrafted goods created by women from Puerto Rico and other locations. Mennonite Central Committee recognized the importance of these efforts and provided support for Edna Ruth in her travels. Over several decades, these trunk sales grew and expanded, and this year we join in the celebration of 75 years of this pioneering work in Fair Trade and support of local artisans around the world.

Lois Kreider initiated some pre-holiday sales at First Mennonite Church in the early 1970s, which grew into the establishment of the Et Cetera Shop, Inc. Donated thrift items sold in the store provided funds to support purchase of artisan-crafted goods through Self-Help, which were then also sold through the same storefront on Main Street in Bluffton. Our stores have grown to now include three physical store locations. Although MCC and Ten Thousand Villages officially separated into individual entities in 2000, our stores remain governed by one board, as Et Cetera Shop, Inc.

Join in our celebration of 75 years of supporting economic development and local artisans around the world through the mission of Ten Thousand Villages: *We create opportunities for artisans in developing countries to earn income by bringing their products and stories to our markets through long-term, fair trading relationships.*



Meet the Staff – Don Burris

Don took on the task of cleaning the cluttered storage room in the basement. It has been transformed into a clean and organized work space. Don has also replaced all the soap and towel dispensers in the church to automatic touchless ones. Thank you for all your hard work Don.



Around the church

- Much appreciation to **John Rich** for the outstanding design and construction of the new video-recording cabinet! Visit Ray on a Sunday morning to see it in action!
- A huge thank you to **Anita Lehman** for the beautiful artwork in the church of Jesus and the work of Jesus depicted in different ethnicities and cultures.



Children and Youth Ministry



**LEGO
SUNDAY
SCHOOL!**
Children &
youth worked
on creating
Lego nativity
scenes
Thanksgiving
weekend!





The Senior High Youth is grateful for all of the support for the Youth Auction. Besides having a great time gathering together in person and over Zoom for the first time in a long time, the auction was a raging success bringing in over \$7,000 in contributions. We cannot thank you enough!



Children's Corner





Homemade
GIFTS MADE EASY



